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ABSTRACT

This study tested the Modern English Infant School Approach to teaching as a partial solution to the problem of properly educating the ghetto child. It was hoped that the approach could (1) improve achievement in reading and arithmetic, (2) improve ability in written composition, (3) improve students' attitudes toward self, the school, the teacher, and peers, and (4) increase students' ability to think creatively. To assess this approach, a comparison was made between three third grade classrooms (N=62) in which the English school approach was used and three other third grade classrooms (N=58) in which a traditional approach was used. At the end of the year, all the children took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, The Way I Feel About Myself, and the Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory. Teachers' subjective evaluations were also collected. Students in the new approach group showed neither significantly greater achievement gains nor significant advantage over the control group in attitude toward self, school, teacher, or peers. Teachers' opinions pointed to improved cooperation, participation, and student-teacher relationship. Recommendations include securing teacher aides, parent participation, an on-going staff development program, and careful planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the project. (Author/MH)

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
Office of Research and Evaluation
Field Research Services

AN EVALUATION OF

A PILOT PROJECT TO ASSESS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MODERN ENGLISH INFANT SCHOOL APPROACH TO LEARNING WITH SECOND AND THIRD YEAR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

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PS 002701

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October 1969

SUMMARY

The McMichael School was awarded a $4,187.00 grant to introduce the Modern English Infant School Approach to teaching in second and third year classrooms.

Objectives

1. To improve achievement in Reading and Arithmetic.
2. To improve ability in written composition.
3. To improve students' attitude toward self, the school, the teacher, and peers.
4. To increase students' ability to think creatively.

Procedure

Students in three third grade classrooms using the "new approach," (Experimental Group) were compared with three classes that used the "traditional approach" (Control Group). Data for only two of the four objectives provided by the school was collected at the end of the program. Teachers' subjective evaluations were also collected.

Results

.Students in the Experimental Group did not demonstrate significantly greater achievement gains than control students.

.Students in the Experimental Group showed no significant advantage over the Control Group in attitude toward self, toward school, the teacher, or peers.

.Teachers' opinions pointed to gains in children's cooperation with each other, increased participation by children in problem solving activities, and a closer teacher-pupil relationship.

Recommendations

.Suggestions are made in regard to securing teacher aides, and parent participation.

.An on-going staff development program is essential for training teachers in the English Infant School Approach.

.Careful planning and monitoring of the project with periodic evaluation will help teachers achieve the goals of the project.

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The Problem

One of the most serious problems facing school administrators and teachers is the failure of large urban school systems to educate the "inner-city" child. A number of educators have hypothesized that the normal classroom procedures of large group instruction are inappropriate and frustrating to teachers and pupils alike.

This study proposed that one second year and three third year classrooms in the normal school setting of the McMichael School be conducted along lines similar to the Modern English Infant School. A minimum of large group instruction and a maximum of small group and individual instruction and activity on the child's part will be featured.

This pilot project was financed by a $4,187.00 grant from Title III funds under the Diffusion and Dissemination program of the School District of Philadelphia.

Objectives

The objectives of this program are classified as either immediate or long term. Immediate objectives are those which can reasonably be expected to be achieved, to some extent, after one year of operation of the program. Long term objectives are philosophical and general aims that one hopes to achieve during the child's stay in school. The latter objectives cannot be measured immediately.

Immediate Objectives

1. Second and third year disadvantaged children exposed to an individualized learning and small group approach (modeled after the current English Infant School) will score significantly higher in Reading and Arithmetic subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in June 1969 than a similar group of children receiving instruction via the whole group instructional approach.

2. The experimental classes will score significantly higher in written composition on predetermined criteria as judged by a panel of language art consultants than the control classes.

3. The experimental group will display more positive attitudes towards school, the teacher, and peers on a "Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory" and in self worth on the "Way I Feel About Myself" instrument than the control classes.

4. The experimental classes will score significantly higher in the area of creativity as measured by the "Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking" than the control classes.

General Educational Goals

1. To encourage the scientific attitude in children.

2. To promote the attitude of cooperation and allow the maximum positive interaction between child and child and teacher and child.

3. To involve the child actively in his own education.

4. To stimulate teachers to think creatively and originally about their classroom structure and methods of teaching.

Methods and Procedures

The project was initiated in November 1968 in three third grade classrooms. The second grade teacher who was to introduce the Modern English Infant School approach dropped out of the program. Therefore, the second grade group was eliminated from this study. The children in the three third grade classrooms that used the "new approach," (Experimental Group) were compared with three third year classes that used the "traditional approach" (Control Group).

In May 1969, the following tests were administered to all the third year children at the McMichael School:

1. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

2. The Way I Feel About Myself

3. Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory

The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking were administered to all the third year students in April and May 1969. Vandalism that did some $20,000 in damage at the McMichael School at the end of May 1969 destroyed all the results of the Torrance Tests. Objective 4, which was to be evaluated solely by the Torrance Tests, cannot be discussed in this report.

Objective 2, which required the school faculty in consultation with language arts consultants to establish predetermined criteria to compare the Experimental Group with the Control Group on written composition, will not be evaluated in this study. Uncontrollable and unforeseern circumstances prevented the school administrator and his faculty from involving a panel of language arts consultants in order to measure the achievement of this objective.

To summarize, two out of the four objectives listed in the revised proposal will be evaluated in this report, comparing the Experimental and Control Groups in the third year class in the areas of academic achievement and attitude towards self and the school.

A description of the Modern English Infant School, written by the faculty of the McMichael School, is presented in Appendix A.

Attitude Instruments

Two locally constructed instruments were used for this evaluation. A copy of each of these instruments along with the accompanying directions can be found in the Appendix. These instruments have some face or content validity. However, very little reliability or validity data is available for them.

The Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory consists of eighteen items that is scored from three (most positive) to one (least positive) with a resulting total score range from eighteen to fifty-four.

The "The Way I Feel About Myself" instrument has twenty items to be scored as the school inventory with a total score range of forty points.

Results

Objective 1

> Second and third year disadvantaged children exposed to an individualized learning and small group approach (modeled after the current English Infant School) will score significantly higher in Reading and Arithmetic on subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in June 1969 than a similar group of children receiving instruction via the whole group instructional approach.

The performance of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills was compared. It was found that there were no significant differences ($F = 0.583$, $p < 0.790$) between the Experimental and Control Groups on any of the subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

Table 1 lists the means for the two groups and illustrates how both groups were alike on all the subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills after the new approach was introduced.

Thus, pupils taught according to the English Infant School approach demonstrated no measurable differences from the Control Group.

Table 1

Mean Grade Equivalent Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (May 1969)

	Experimental (N=62)	Control (N=58)
Post Measures - Iowa Tests of Basic Skills		
1. Vocabulary	2.6	2.6
2. Reading	2.6	2.6
3. Spelling	3.0	3.0
4. Capitalization	2.8	3.0
5. Punctuation	3.4	3.4
6. Usage	2.9	2.9
7. Arithmetic-Concepts	3.1	3.1
8. Arithmetic-Problem Solving	2.7	2.8

Objective 3

The Experimental Group will display more positive attitudes towards school, the teacher, and peers on a Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory and in self worth on The Way I Feel About Myself instrument than the Control classes.

The results of the two groups on the Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory and The Way I Feel About Myself are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

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Table 2

Average Score on the Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory and The Way I Feel About Myself Instrument

	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Average Score	Number of Pupils	Average Score	Number of Pupils
Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory	2.0	55	2.2	54
The Way I Feel About Myself	1.6	111	1.7	75

Table 2 illustrates the means and differences for the two groups. Table 3 shows that the observed difference between the Experimental Group and Control group of 0.2 and 0.1 is not large enough to be considered a significant difference.

Table 3

Results of Analyzing Difference of Two Groups on Two Attitude Measures

	F	df.	p
Pupil Attitude Toward School Inventory	2.674	1.107	.105 (not significant)
The Way I Feel About Myself	1.317	1.184	.253 (not significant)

To summarize, the English Infant School Approach to Learning yielded no significant differences between the Experimental and Control Groups in attitude toward school, the teacher, reading, arithmetic, and peer, and self-worth on the two instruments administered.

General Educational Goals

1. To encourage the scientific attitude in children.

2. To promote the attitude of cooperation and allow the maximum positive interaction between child and child and teacher and child.

3. To involve the child actively in his own education.

4. To stimulate teachers to think creatively and originally about their classroom structure and methods of teaching.

In applying for refunding of this project, an interim report of the ongoing project was submitted by the school faculty in March 1969. In this report the teachers noted some of the successes and major problems that they encountered. Overall, the teachers' reports express a great deal of enthusiasm and support for continuing their initial efforts after overcoming many unforeseen circumstances. Though their reports are wholly subjective, it does give direction and guidance to those who would replicate this study and/or continue this program.

The report includes the following statements:

A. Benefits Reported by Teachers

Children in the program have made strides in the following areas:

.Increased cooperation with each other.

.Increased confidence in handling of new materials.

.Closer working relationship with teachers.

.Increased participation by children in problem-solving activities.

B. Classroom Problems Reported by Teachers

.Too much classroom time is still teacher-directed.

.With experience, teachers are gauging the amount of time needed to spend on a unit of study and how many units to work on at one time. This was a problem at first.

.Record-keeping of individual children's progress is difficult since different youngsters work at different activities at the same time. Training youngsters to do their own record-keeping is a move toward solving this problem.

.Initial experience in the new approach has redirected the attitudes of students and teachers in the proper use of materials and class time.

C. Planning Problems

.The initial proposal did not build in enough funds to purchase necessary furniture, materials and supplies.

.The staff development program was not carried out because of lack of sufficient funds.

.Non-participating teachers failed to express an interest in participating in such a program as was expected in original proposal.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this "shakedown" year indicate that there were no differences in academic achievement and attitudes between those students participating in the English Infant School Approach and those children receiving instruction by other methods. Since this is a new project, and a new philosophy for the School District, many planning problems were encountered that may well be responsible for showing no signficant advantages for the new approach.

The following recommendations appear to be necessary if the program is to be repeated:

1. In the initial stages, the staff should be properly oriented to the principles and practical application of the English Infant School Approach.

2. A continuous in-service program should be held for all the teachers in order to clarify the objectives, methods and procedures of the program.

3. Orientation sessions should be held with the parents prior to introducing the new approach in order to create a receptive climate for the new project.

4. In the initial stages, teachers should be given supportive services such as aides and consultants.

5. Future programs should provide sufficient funds for adequate furniture, equipment and supplies, and for an adequate evaluation service.

6. The proposal should be written with measureable and realistic objectives.

7. Evaluation should be designed to give the principal and faculty sufficiently frequent feedback to permit them to monitor and revise the program as needed.

APPENDIX A

Discussion of the Modern English Infant School by Faculty of McMichael School

The Modern English Infant School is an attempt to involve children in a vital and active way in their own education. The children in such classrooms are encouraged to begin and continue to completion individual projects in all areas. Such projects demand a great deal of special materials and equipment in the classroom for the children's use, as not all children will be pursuing the same or even related goals. The pursuit of these individual topics of interest leads naturally to manipulating things within the environment to find out, and then to books and other resources to find out even more.

Writing about the projects is a part of this process, as is talking to the teacher and the other children about what one is doing. Writing and talking freely is encouraged by the teacher in order to strengthen the child's care and precision in the use of language. This, along with the activities, means that there is a certain amount of noise and movement in the classroom. This is expected and tolerated, even encouraged. The classroom is equipped and arranged for the whole child -- providing outlets of emotional and physical growth and development as well as intellectual.

In England, where approximately 50% of the primary schools are of this nature, it is asserted that the modern primary approach does lay a firm foundation in the basic skills and is also more in the interests of the children.

> They say: Children need to be themselves, to live with other children and with grown ups, to learn from their environment, to enjoy the present, to get ready for the future, to create and to love, to learn to face adversity, to behave responsibly, in a word, to be human beings.[1]

The teachers in this learning environment are more able to provide for the continuous learning of the child at his own rate. He is able to do much of the structured teaching in reading and arithmetic in small groups within the classroom. In the individual project work of the children, the teacher is a resource for the child and constantly can take advantage of the learning opportunities as they appear in the child's work. The teacher encourages the child to become intimately involved in his own search for knowledge. The teacher is thus able to adopt a consultative, guiding, stimulating role rather than a purely didactic one.

[1] Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Children and Their Primary Schools (London, 1967). par. 507

The teacher also encourages children to work together on projects and constantly strives to get the children to use self-discipline. Regardless of the freedom of activities, there is always a need for the teacher to maintain and enforce certain rules of behavior, one of the most important that of not disturbing the other children in the room. The quest for self-discipline of the child means that this enforcing of rules by the teacher should be as subtle as possible without allowing a child to go beyond the limits.

This freeing of the teacher from the didactic role is also encouraged by the inclusion of more than one age within the classroom. This is a situation that would take time to work into. Older children are able to encourage younger children and help reinforce their use of reading and arithmetic skills. They are also available as resources in other areas due to their greater knowledge and experience of the world. By taking part in the teaching process the older children are strengthened in their own skills and are also able to identify more strongly with the adult teacher. A mixed age grouping means that all levels would be represented in the classroom. Thus, it is an accepted thing that some children would be far advanced and others just beginning certain studies. This range of achievement helps children of lower intellectual capacity to feel themselves fully functioning members of the classroom and thus reduce their sense of shame about being "dumb."

Asking children to take part in the teaching must be done with discretion and sensitivity. Teachers must not be guilty of burdening the child with more responsibility than he can handle. A description of deprived children in England points out this danger. This passage is strikingly similar to the condition of many of the children in large city schools.

> Children may have been forced into premature responsibility. They are often given the care of younger children and are free to roam, to go to bed, or to stay up, to eat when and where they can. This produces what is often a spurious maturity.[2]

The Advisory Council recommends that "confidence....be encouraged by tasks which are fully within the children's capacity;" and that "a measure of irresponsibility has to be allowed for; it will pretty certainly come later, and in a less acceptable form, if not permitted at the proper time."[3] The teacher should be able to relieve children of this overwhelming responsibility without dominating them in a way which prevents them from developing independence. Children should be in such classrooms for more than one year for them to work effectively.

[2]Central Advisory Council, par. 17

[3]Central Advisory Council, par. 137

One of the current trends in the education of children supports this method of activities and learning. Baldwin, Isaacs, Luria, Bruner, and particularly Jean Piaget say that the "great majority of primary school children can only learn from concrete situations, as lived or described ....According to Piaget, all learning calls for organization of material or of behavior on the part of the learner, and the learner has to adapt himself and is altered in the process. Learning takes place through a continuous process of interaction between the learner and his environment, which results in the building up of consistent and stable patterns of behavior, physical and mental."[4]

In other words, "play -- in the sense of 'messing about' either with material objects or with other children, and of creating fantasies -- is vital to children's learning and therefore vital in school."[5] It is also true (and we observe it in our own lives) that activity and experience, both physical and mental, are often the best means of gaining knowledge and acquiring facts. Therefore the purpose is to involve children more actively in the learning process.

A source of danger to teachers in a low income area is that the children do not do so well academically as other children. There is a desire on the teacher's part to spend all his time on the three R's thinking that if he does not, the child will be handicapped for the rest of his life. However, "these children need time for play and imaginative and expressive work and may suffer later if they do not get it at school."[6] It is also important to remember that individual differences between children are so great that any class, however homogeneous it seems, should always be treated as a body of children needing individual and different attention. It is a widely accepted theory that until a child is ready to take a particular step forward, it is a waste of time to try to teach him to take it. Teachers must have a situation in which they can be sensitive to the prime learning time for each child.

A classroom based on activity (in the first three grades) results in the teacher being more able to teach and provide for each child on his own level. It also creates a more suitable atmosphere for children of these ages.

The hope is "to build on and strengthen children's intrinsic interest in learning and lead them to learn for themselves rather than from fear of disapproval or desire for praise."[7]

From birth, all children are fascinated by the world around them. They spend most of their waking time learning anything and everything from their experiences that they can. It is wasteful and a disgrace that some children learn to spend their time in school learning how to avoid, to turn off, the lessons of the teacher.

[4] Ibid - par. 521
[5] Ibid - par. 525
[6] Ibid - par. 137
[6] Ibid - par. 532

"Therefore, teachers need to enlist the voluntary effort of children to find out about themselves and their world, to stimulate their curiosity, to raise self-expectations, to develop thinking strategies, to do original open-ended problem solvings, to kindle a desire for intellectual competence, to become fluent in goal focused dialogue, to learn to act and to plan their own learning tasks and to utilize their energies in sustained efforts in learning."[8]

The purpose of our schools is to prepare children to be independent and responsible adults in our society. The classroom situation described here is designed with this end in view. The children in them not only learn academic skills, but also to be responsible and independent children.

In the words of the Central Advisory Council for Education in England, "the best preparation for being a happy and useful man or woman is to live fully as a child."[9]

These classrooms provide an opportunity for children to live and learn more fully.

[8]The Learning Centers Project General Philosophy and Principles of Pedagogy.

[9]Central Advisory Council - par. 506

APPENDIX B - MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

INSTRUCTIONS	A
STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL INVENTORY	B
STUDENT ATTITUDE ANSWER SHEET	C
THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF	D

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
Office of Research and Evaluation
Division of Research

Instructions for Administering the Student Attitudes Toward Learning Questionnaire

Generally, the instructions are similar to those given for the administration of any test in the public school. The room should be properly ventilated, with good lighting and the children should be reassured that the test will not constitute a part of their grade.

Before the consulting teacher gives the following directions, she should put on the front board the following pictures:

The consulting teacher should begin by saying the following: "You are being asked to show your feelings about how you feel about school and this class. There is no correct answer for any of the questions. What we want to know is how you feel about certain things. Please don't mark like your neighbor or the way you think your teacher would like you to mark. Your teacher, in fact, will never see these papers. Mark the way you really feel. For example: Suppose that you were asked the following question:

How do you feel when you think of eating a chocolate covered piece of cake?

Now some of you think you like it very much and would be happy to have a slice of it right now. So now look at the blackboard! Which one of these noses of the three figures would you fill in?

(Respond to the children)

That's right. This one over here, this happy, smiling face. You would fill in the nose of this face if you felt very happy if you think of eating a slice of chocolate covered cake.

Now some of you might hate and really can't stand chocolate covered cake. So which nose of these three figures would you fill in if you could not stand chocolate covered cake?

(Respond to children's response until you get the right answer)

That's right. This one over here, this sad looking face. You would fill in the nose of this face if you felt terrible and hated to eat chocolate covered cake.

Now what if you really didn't care one way or the other; that is, you don't feel happy or sad about eating chocolate covered cake. Which nose of the three figures would you fill in?

(Respond to children's response until you get the correct answer)

Again, you are right; this middle figure, which looks neither happy nor sad. You would fill in the nose of this face if you felt neither happy nor sad but you would or would not eat it.

Now children, I am going to distribute a sheet like the one on the board. For each question that I am going to ask you, you are to choose one of the three figures for each question and fill in with your pencil the nose of that face that expresses your feeling."

(Distribute papers)

Give directions as to filling in name, date, circling either G (girl) or B (boy), name of teacher, and school.

Administer test.

A

Student Attitude Toward School Inventory
(Grades 1-3)

1. How do you feel when it's time to get up and go to school?
2. How do you feel when you think about going home after school today?
3. How do you feel when you have to take out your reader?
4. How do you feel about how well you read?
5. How do you feel when you think about how fast you learn?
6. How do you feel about how much you know?
7. How do you feel about how well you do arithmetic?
8. How do you feel about the way your teacher treats you?
9. How do you feel when the teacher says that it's your turn to read out loud before the group?
10. How do you feel about how well you do your schoolwork as compared to the other children in the class?
11. How do you feel when you think of doing homework?
12. How do you feel when you think about your schoolwork?
13. How do you feel when you are working with others in class?
14. How do you feel when you think about studying?
15. How do you feel when you think about the principal?
16. How do you feel when you think about this school?
17. How do you feel when you think about this classroom?
18. How do you feel when you think about most of the children in this class?

APPENDIX B - MEASURING INSTRUMENTS
Section C - STUDENT ATTITUDE ANSWER SHEET
Optical Scanning Forms, Optical Scanning Corporation, Newtown, Pa.
is not available for reproduction. This page has been omited.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
Office of Research and Evaluation
Division of Pupil Personnel and Counseling

Student's Name_____

Boy_____Girl_____(Check One)

Teacher's Name_____

Room Number_____

School_____

THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF

Here are a set of statements. Some of them are always true of you and so you will check the block marked always. Some are never true of you and so you will check the block marked never. If a statement is sometimes true of you but is not always true, mark the block sometimes. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we will mark the way you really feel inside.

EXAMPLE:

I am shy.
If this statement is always true of you, check the block marked always.

I am shy.
If it is sometimes true of you but not always true, check the block marked sometimes.

I am shy.
If it is never true of you, check the block marked never.

	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
	X		
		X	
			X

		ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1.	I am a happy person	1.		
2.	I am sad	2.		
3.	I am smart	3.		
4.	When I grow up I will be an important person	4.		
5.	My family isn't pleased with me	5.		
6.	I have good ideas	6.		
7.	I am an important member of my family	7.		
8.	I like being the way I am	8.		
9.	I am good in my schoolwork	9.		

NOTE: This test was printed on Optical Scanning Form for use by pupils.

		ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
10.	I am an important member of my class			
11.	My friends like my ideas			
12.	My parents expect too much of me			
13.	I like school			
14.	My classmates in school think I have good ideas			
15.	I would rather work alone than with a group			
16.	I wish I were different			
17.	My family is pleased with me			
18.	I am the same as other people			
19.	I can be trusted			
20.	I am a good person			

JA/cd
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ROOM TO GROW